

# PRESS RELEASE

## Congressman John Conyers, Jr.

Fourteenth District, Michigan  
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary  
Dean, Congressional Black Caucus

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### **CONYERS ON ELECTION REFORM DEAL:** **“A HISTORIC STEP FORWARD FOR VOTING RIGHTS”**

Congressman John Conyers, Jr. Ranking Member of the House Judiciary Committee, House sponsor of the Senate-passed election reform bill and Dean of the Congressional Black Caucus, issued the following statement regarding today's agreement on the election reform package:

“Nearly two years after the wholesale disenfranchisement of the elderly, people of color and individuals with disabilities, we have at last passed legislation which will help to place in the dustbin of history the butterfly ballots, punchcard voting machines and discriminatory practices of Florida. This bill bears Martin Luther King's name and gives tribute to his vision and dream of a world without barriers to the exercise of the most basic right of citizenship, the right to vote.

Because of this bill, every American will be closer to living in a democracy where every vote that is cast is counted and where the legitimacy of our democracy is no longer placed in doubt. Because of this bill, voting machines will help voters instead of hindering them.

There were naysayers in the Congress and on some of the editorial pages who claimed that Senator Chris Dodd and I were unrealistic and that our vision of minimum federal voting rights standards for machines would never come to pass. The fact that it did is a tribute to our vision that voting rights should not be left to anyone's whims, and it is a tribute to Senator Dodd's tireless efforts to pass this bill and Majority Leader Daschle's rock solid faith in the legislation. My colleagues in the House, Steny Hoyer and Bob Ney deserve tremendous praise for their role in this agreement as well.

The Voter I.D. provision contained in this bill is not a provision I would have wanted. That being said, its inclusion in this agreement cannot possibly overshadow the tremendous step forward the bill represents. We live in a democracy where the essence of accomplishment is compromise and yielding in part to different points of view.

At the end of the day and this long struggle, we have a bill that represents a tremendous advance of civil rights and for our democracy.”

On March 22, 2001, Senate Rules Committee Chairman Chris Dodd and House Judiciary Committee Ranking Member John Conyers, Jr., introduced the “Equal Protection of Voting Rights Act,” the basis for this conference report.

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